

# NEWS

THE CIVIL AIR PATROL  
U.S. AIR FORCE AUXILIARY  
NEW YORK WING

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## **SATELLITE PICKS UP SUNKEN BOAT'S EMERGENCY BEACON; OSWEGO CIVIL AIR PATROL FINDS DEVICE IN PRIVATE HOME**

OSWEGO, NY -- A family's discovery of an unusual object during a winter trek on a beach resulted in a search by both the U.S. Coast Guard and the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Saturday, Dec. 21. The object the family found was transmitting a distress signal that was picked up by search-and-rescue satellite.

"This falls under the heading of, 'you never know what you could pick up on the beach'," said Lt. Col. Steve Perta of Rome, vice commander (north) of CAP's New York Wing.

"The couple found the device which had washed up on the beach on Friday while walking with their children and dog. They picked up the beacon and brought it home, not knowing what it was."

In the meantime, the Coast Guard responded to the distress beacon. But, surmising that an emergency transmitter broke away from a vessel that sunk off the coast of Oswego in Lake Ontario about a month ago and activated as it washed ashore, Coast Guard personnel searched the shoreline from Oswego Harbor to Alcan. They found debris, but no distress beacon, so the Coast Guard contacted the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base, VA to dispatch the Civil Air Patrol, which is equipped with search-and-rescue radio tracking equipment.

CAP's New York Wing was alerted by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, and Lt. Colonel Perta was assigned the role of Incident Commander. Lt. Colonel Perta alerted the Central New York Group, which dispatched teams from the Greater Oswego County Composite Squadron. Personnel assembled at a command post at the Oswego County Airport in Fulton.

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Even though high winds and lake effect snow prevented the launch of CAP search aircraft, Lt. Colonel Perta said he was able to use satellite positioning data to direct a ground team to the exact street intersection in Oswego, which allowed the team to acquire the beacon's signal. Using ground-based direction finding equipment, they were able to track the signal to a private home on Smith Beach Road.

"The occupants of the house were not home, and the CAP ground team could see the emergency transmitter through a window in plain sight," Lt. Colonel Perta said. "A note was left at the home and, once I found out who lived there, I was able to leave a message on their answering machine."

When the family returned home and saw the note, they contacted Lt. Colonel Perta who told them how to deactivate the device, known as an EPIRB (Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon). Similar to Emergency Locator Transmitters required on aircraft, an EPIRB is a standard piece of safety equipment on commercial and recreational water vessels.

Lt. Colonel Perta said the Coast Guard identified the vessel that capsized a month ago as the "Pachbleel".

The Civil Air Patrol ground team and command post personnel included:

- Lt. Col. **Fred Bullard** of Oswego, Squadron Commander.
- Capt. **Francis Sussey** of Constantia, Senior Programs Officer.
- 1st. Lt. **Horace Zellar** of Fulton, Communications Officer.
- 1st. Lt. **Earl Holdren** of Hannibal, Aerospace Education Officer.
- Senior Mbr. **Robert LaMay** of Oswego, Finance Officer.
- Senior Mbr. **Grant Sussey** of Constantia, Administrative Officer.

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The Civil Air Patrol, the official Air Force Auxiliary, is a nonprofit organization chartered by Congress. It performs more than 85% of inland search and rescue missions tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center in the continental United States. Volunteers also take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to America's youths through CAP cadet programs. The New York Wing consists of nine Group Commands and 69 Squadrons spread across the state. It can deploy 17 aircraft, plus ground vehicles and communications vans.